

61 Mech Monthly

61 Mech Veterans Association

61 Meg Maandeliks

61 Meg Veterane Vereniging



May 2024



Nasionale Skouerskuur Gariep

OOG GETUIE ERVARINGS UIT DIE VERLEDE - OPS REINDEER

61 MVV INISIATIEF - STORMS VAN DIE LEWÉ

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BELANGRIK

61 Meg Veterane en Vriende

Die EXCO wil u graag opgedateer hou oor ons aktiwiteite

Stel ons in staat om dit te kan doen

**STUUR DIE VOLGENDE INLIGTING AAN:
MEMBERSHIP@61MECH.ORG.ZA**

Naam

Kontaknommer

Dorp woonagtig

Datums in 61 Meg gedien

E-Pos adres



At Gariep 2024

IMPORTANT

61 Mech Veterans and Friends

The EXCO would like to keep you updated on our activities

Enable us to be able to do this

**SEND THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION TO:
MEMBERSHIP@61MECH.ORG.ZA**

Name

Contact number

Residential town

Dates served in 61 Meg

Email address

DON'T FORGET !!!

61 Mech

***Veterane Vereniging /
Veterans Association***

***Jaarlikse Gedenkdienst –
Annual Memorial Service***

17 Augustus / August 2024



THE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE 61 MECH VETERANS ASSOCIATION

To involve all past members, from all arms of the Defence Force, and once more make them part of the unique camaraderie which characterised the unit.

To let the ethos of 61 Mech continue as regards the professional actions, respect and trust, singular friendships, good discipline and proud actions which characterised the unit.

We were interdependent in the hour of conflict, and we want to maintain this esprit de corps in times of peace as well.

There will be no political connotation attached to our activities. Any action we take must have a positive effect on nation-building, peace and reconciliation in general.

To see that the unit's military legacy was properly documented – both human experiences and the great contribution made to the development of mobile-warfare doctrine.

We accept that some of our veterans may still seek closure, and we accept a responsibility to help them with this.

What Happened in May?

PRO PATRIA MUSEUM MILITÊRE FEES - 1 MEI 2024

61 MVV WAS DAAR



Verkorte Artikel uit Maroela Media

Mense het Woensdag 1 Mei 2024 van vroegoggend na die Voortrekkermonument gestroom vir die jaarlikse Militêre fees. Dit is die derde jaar wat dié fees in samewerking met die Pro Patria Museum (PPM) gereël is. Dit was die grootste militêre fees die afgelope drie jaar wat getalle betref. Duisende mense het opgeruk na die Voortrekkermonument.

“Vir die Voortrekkermonument is dit weer eens die grootste voorreg en ondervinding om saam met die Pro Patria Museum die Militêre fees by die Voortrekkermonument te kan aanbied. Ons sien vandag weer, ’n mens se gemeenskap is baie breër as wat jy dink. Die opkoms was ongelooflik goed en daaroor is ons baie dankbaar. Ons siendaarna uit om die fees elke jaar net groter en beter te maak.” (Henk Maree, funksies- en feestebestuurder by die Voortrekkermonument.)

Om 09:00 is ’n optog gehou om die fees in te lei waar Skotse doedelsakspelers die mense vermaak het met pragtige spel. Motorfietse en jong manne geklee soos soldate het ook deel uitgemaak van die optog.

Meer as 80 stalletjies, uitstallings en ook kosstalletjies het vanjaar bygedra tot die fees se reuse sukses. Volgens afgetrede Genl.Maj. Lawrence Smith, voorsitter van die Pro Patria Museum, is daar vanjaar 25% meer militêre veterane-organisasies wat deelgeneem het aan die fees.

Lesings deur veterane, wat stories uit die oorlogsdag vertel, is ook aangebied.



2 May 2024 – Club Omuthiya

Andrew Whitaker

As usual the first Thursday of the month featured a Bring and Braai at Club Omuthiya. A turnout of about 30 members included long distant travellers en-route to Gariep. Andre Bezuidenhout out from Abu Dhabi, Gerard Van Rooyen up from the Cape and my wife and I from the Eastern Cape.

Sadly Barries Barnard was unable to attend, due to ill health, but thanks Reg Walkerley for the effort made to ensure that we all enjoyed ourselves.

As usual a good contingent of Smokeshell veterans attended. Left to right in photo, Gerard van Rooyen, Andre Bezuidenhout, Pieter Evert. Mourie van der Bijl. HP Ferreira, Andrew Whitaker and Joggie Rautenbach.

It was also great to see Cassie Schoeman and his wife Ria at the get together.



3 May 2024 – – Smokeshell breakfast

Andrew Whitaker

As has become custom, when I attend a Skouer skuur at Club Omuthiya, we organise a breakfast with the Smokeshell veteran's the next morning. This time we met at the Wimpy at the Hyper-rama.

Again a good turnout and in the photo left to right, HP Ferreira, Andre Bezuidenhout, Andrew Whitaker, Marlene Whitaker, Betty Jennings, Pieter Evert, Gordon Jennings, Mourie van der Bijl and Gerard Van Rooyen.

It was most enjoyable to catch up before heading to gariep.



18 Mei - International Museum Day at AFB Ysterplaat, 61 Riders



4 MEI - EERSTE 61 MEG KALAHARI VETERANE “SKOUERSKUUR”

Die streek is droog, die son skyn uit ‘n lug van meedoënlose blou, en bak die land totdat dit glinster van hitte. Nagte bring ‘n skerp kontras, die lug word ysig soos die sterre die fluweelduisternis prik. Dit is ‘n land van uiterstes, onvergewensgesind en hard, maar dit bevat ‘n vreemde skoonheid, ‘n skerp, rou krag wat beide kan verskrik en boei.

Hierdie streek is ook die tuiste van ‘n handvol 61 Meg Veterane. Hier het ons op 4 Mei 2024 broederskapsbande hernu en gesmee.

Die weermag waarvan ons deel was, die stryd wat ons as ‘n eenheid gevoer het, die oorwinnings wat ons gedeel het, dit was alles ingeweeft in die stof van hierdie skouerskuur.

Ons het ‘n tasbare stukkie van ons herinneringe gevoel wat in ons klop en dit omhels.





Hennie le Roux

Ons klomp het saam met Jaap Steyn die 61 Meg Kalahari groep gestig.

Onder andere het ons Dawid Lotter se bundel wat hy vir my in 2017 onderteken het opgeveil vir die 61 Meg Buddy fonds.

Die bundel is verkoop vir R 1 200.

Die persoon wat dit gekoop het se naam is Tjaart Meyer van Hartswater.

3-5 MAY 61 VETERANS SKOUERSKUUR AT GARIEP

ANDREW WHITAKER



This is the 3rd one I've been to. By far the smallest with about 40 veterans attending, but in my mind the best of the three I've attended. Maybe it was the great weather, maybe the fact that it was more intimate, I'm sure various other factors played a role.

Friday afternoon saw most arriving, some with caravans, some with tents, some with modified bakkies and of course some of us that simply booked chalets.

Friday evening saw a few fires started and a little bit of meat braaied, a little bit of drinking, a bit of music and generally lots of catching up.

Of course we cannot forget the effort of a few people to make this such a great weekend. In the absence of any current Exco members, for various reasons, Jannie Nieuwoudt stepped up to the plate and organised the weekend. Maybe slightly less formal than prior years, but that is Jannie's style and it worked exceptionally well.

Thanks and well done Jannie.

Wayne Riddell did an awesome job in both bringing the Memorabilia trailer down from Gauteng, attending to all the sales of memora-



Smokeshell vets at Gariep, Mourie van der Bijl, Pieter evert, Lawrie Claase (met at dam for first time- he was a tiffie during Smokeshell), Andre Bezuidenhout, Mike Luyts, Gerard van Rooyen, Andrew Whitaker and Paul Louw



bilias and probably most importantly bringing a handful of veterans that could not afford it, down with him. Great work Wayne, much appreciated.

We were without a chaplain this year. Last year Andre Anthonissen travelled all the way from Windhoek to be with us. Unfortunately he is currently in hospital recovering from a fall. We then nominated HP Ferreira for the role. Unfortunately HP and his wife, Phia are both fighting serious health issues and were unable to attend.

Fortunately we found a replacement. Thank you Paul Louw for stepping up to the plate.

Saturday morning, saw the parade, some push-ups and a 2.4km walk, followed by more fires,



breakfast and relaxation.

At 4pm we started of the dam wall ceremony. We only had 3 bikers to lead the procession of vehicles over the wall this year and as is customary the wind picked up to gale force for the duration of the ceremony.

I was assigned the task of being Master of ceremonies, a somewhat daunting task. We had something very special to attend to at the start as ret Lt Col Paul Louw presented "Geel Messies" to Smokeshell veterans, Andre Bezuidenhout, Mourie Van der Bijl and Mike Luyts.

We then remembered the 61 veterans killed in action and those who died while serving. It was noted that it was the 46th anniversary of the first 2 deaths, although at that stage serving with Juliet, of Cpls Truebody and Bridgman.

We also remembered those veterans that had passed away recently, Andre Marx, Andre Martin. Paul Muller, Theo Wilken, Andrew Spann, Hilton Naish, Hilton Ratcliffe, Johan Coetzee, Kenneth Heathcote, Kees Orten, Bennie Du Plessis, Gerhard Louw (past commanding officer of 61), Herman Prentzel, Julian Phillips and Demetri Friend (with special mention of all the work he did for our veterans).



Then family of veterans – Joey Hartman (Paul Louw's mother), Hannelie Dippenaar (General Dippenaar's wife), Kirsty Heathfield (Brian's daughter) and Lynette Elliott (my sister).

Acting Ds Paul Louw then gave a short message to the surviving families of those lost while serving.

We also recorded those suffering health issues, Andre Anthionissen, Barries Barnard and HP and Phia Ferreira.



Gerard Van Rooyen then played the last post on his Concertina, before we threw our poppies into the dam.

Then it was back to camp, with more braaing, drinking, music, chatting. Gerard again got the concertina talking and was accompanied by a couple of ladies playing guitar. Jannie said a few thank you's, a few awards were given out and an appeal was made for any financial assistance towards the upgrade of the museum.

A donation of R10 000 was received, together with a few smaller amounts, so in total R11300. Thank you.



At about 8 on Sunday morning, those that had not left gathered for a short church service again led by Paul Louw and then it was good-bye until next year.





Mike Luyts receiving geel messie



Andre Bezuidenhout receiving geel messie



Mourie van der Bijl receiving geel messie

3rd Generation Parade at Comrades Algoa Shellhole Port Elizabeth - 12 Mei 2024





RMVO SA - CMVO SA JAARLIKSE HERDENKINGSDIENS DIE SA WEERMAG MUUR VAN HERINNERING 26 MEI 2024

Hierdie is een van die hoogtepunte op die jaarlikse kalender vir gedenkdienste en word aangebied deur die Raad vir Militêre Veterane Organisasies van Suid-Afrika (RMVD SA). Die muur is op 25 Oktober 2009 in gebruik geneem, waarna daar jaarliks gedenkdienste gehou word. Die name van 2539 individue wat in diens gesterf het, verskyn op die muur. 782 van hierdie soldate, wie se name met 'n asterisk gemerk is, het tydens operasies gesterf.

Die 61 MVV het soos vorige jare die kranse tafel beman.





Great to see the CMVO involving the youth. They are the ones who will carry our legacy forward. Our addition to this being the “Born of 61”.



Wayne Riddell and Candice running the wreath registration table.



Born of 61



61 Riders

Sandy's Borderboys Memorial Parade - 26 May



Deur: Albertus Venter

Redaksie Nota:

Die artikel lees soos Albertus Venter dit geskryf het. Die gebruik van krú taal is deur Redaksie ligtelik gesensor.

So het 4 Mei 2024 weer aangebreek en verby gegaan. En elke jaar dink ek terug na dié dag 46 jaar gelede in 1978 wat ons 1977 1 SAI Bn inname troepe die Swapo-basis by Chetequera tydens Operasie Reindeer in totaliteit opgef@k en vernietig het.

Om Operasie Reindeer te verstaan moet ons eintlik begin by die begin.

Januarie 1977. Omtrent 2000 rou rowers arriveer op die Bloemfontein stasie oor 'n tydperk van omtrent drie dae. RSM Lloyd Calitz ontvang die manne persoonlik op die sta-

sie. Hy lyk na 'n heel vriendelike Oom want jy sien net tande. Eers later besef ons dat sy tande wat ons sien nie vanweë 'n vriendelike smile is nie. Hy kners op sy tande van bef@kgeid. Dit was wild en woes. 'n Klomp Troepe besef dat 1 SAI Bn nie 'n plek is waar jy behoort te wees nie en verplaas na ander Eenhede toe wat makker lyk. Na 'n paar weke is daar omtrent net agthonderd van ons oor.

Ons word goed opgef@k en goed opgelei. Ons PF Leiergroep was baie goed, met hier en daar 'n simpel doos tussen hulle. Ons Junior Leiers wat Tweede Luitenant en Korporaals was, was ook goed - met hier en daar 'n enkele arrogante klein kak wat f@kkol geweet het nie en hom verbeel het hy is 'n moerse Generaal of 'n ding. Ons het hulle gou ingebreek. 'n Hardegat Troep laat nie toe dat 'n Klein Kak met hom mors nie. Ons is die eerste manne wat intensief opgelei is as Ratelsoldate. 61 Meg Bn Gp het toe nog nie bestaan nie. Ons word later 'n moerse goeie vegeenheid.

4/5 MAY 1978- OPERATION REINDEER: THE OVERLAND ASSAULT ON CHETEQUERA TARGET BRAVO



PHOTO: Ratels, Elands and trucks of Juliet and form for the advance into Angola INSET: Frank Bestbier, commander of Juliet, briefs General Viljoen before the attack

Operation Reindeer consisted of three different phases: An early morning airborne assault 250 km into Angola to Cassinga followed later in day by a overland mech attack around Chetequera and main SWAPO base Target Bravo. 32 Bn would attack on 6 May. The force attacking Bravo was named BG Juliet commanded by Commandant Frank Bestbier and consisted of 31 Ratels, 23 Eland, 9 Buffels and 18 trucks. It attacked in three teams from the northeast after the camp was bombed by the Canberra's and Buccaneers that struck Cassinga earlier in the day. The attack went in and met fierce SWAPO resistance, albeit disorganized. Another run though mopped up the remaining SWAPO. Two South African soldiers were killed against 248 SWAPO guerrilla's dead. 200 were taken prisoner. Mechanized combat teams led by Commandants Joubert and Serfontein attacked the bases just across the cut line, but they proved to be largely abandoned.

**Op die basis van Cassinga, word Swapo Plan oorval
Onverhoeds word hul verras, met 'n strawwe lugaanval
Vlaag op vlaag valskerms word neergelaat
Afsnygroepe – aanvalsgroepe - plaat na plaat
Vernietig en ontwig het hul Swapo se bevelstruktuur
En ontnem die vermoë om detachments suid te stuur**

**Twee honderd-en-dertig kilometer verder suid
'n Aanval andersoortig met 'n ander dreungeluid
Op ses basisse naby Chetequera daardie selfde dag
'n Grondaanval met 'n mobiele mag
Deur Veggroep Juliet die mobiele konsep te beproef
Met twee ander groepe om die wye teiken te kan troef**

**Helikopters met Drie-Twee Bataljon se troepe vol
Om kleinere teikens aan te val en op te rol
Oos van Chetequera sou hul verwoesting saai
Soos die helikopterlemme warrelwinde waai**

**Al drie magte, het die oorwinningslied gesing
In elke groep was offers gebring
In Reindeer elke man in elke mag sy deel gedoen
Geeneen kon in isolasie op oorwinning roem.**

Dawid Lotter

In die Lente van 1977 is ons vir twee weke op Oshivelo waar ons, ons laaste finale opleiding ontvang. Ons word weer vir oulaas goed opgedonner en moet heeltyd aanhoor hoe kak ons is. Ons word ge-evalueer deur 'n moerse klomp High Brass. Daar is ook 'n Buitelander of twee met range wat ons nie eers ken nie, maar jy kan sommer sien hierdie is Grootkoppe wat oorlog verstaan. Waarkynlik 'n klomp Israeliete.

Jare later lees ek in een van Genl. Roland de Vries se boeke waar hy praat van ons groep en daardie spesifieke evaluasie.

Hy skryf: "They were the best of the best."

Nogals lekker om dit nou te weet, nadat ons toe heeltyd moes aanhoor hoe kak ons was. Ons was 'n goed opgeleide groep, wild, jonk, superfiks en bang vir f@kkol. Ons was steeds Ratelloos, want die goed staan en mooi lyk in Bloemfontein.

Hierna is ons skaars op Etale toe die eerste kak begin spat. Ons het heelwat kontakte en 'n hele paar landmyn voorvalle. Ons verloor ook twee van ons pelle; Venter en Bishop, met 'n moerse hinderlaag naby St. Mary's Mission. Eksself is vandag effens doof en krupel as gevolg van die myn wat Johnny Channer oppad na Oshikango afgetrap het. Dit was op 26 Desember 1977. Dit is ook waar Kmdt Roland de Vries sy arm gebuig het.

Vroeg in 1978 is die manne Bloemfontein toe. Hulle dog hulle gaan op 'n moerse lang lekker pas. Hulle kry wel 'n paar dae af, maar wat hulle nie weet nie, is dat hulle eintlik kom Ratels haal. Die Ratels is later gebruik om vir Johan vd Mescht te gaan soek. Hy is by Elundu se watergat gevang deur 'n baie goed opgeleide Swapo kêrel met die naam van Danger Ashipala. Dis ook in hierdie tyd wat die tweejaar diensplig 'n volle werklikheid word. Dus was daar nie genoeg blyplek vir die nuwe 1 SA Bn Troepe van die nuwe inname en die 1977 Oumanne in 1 SA nie. Dis 'n moerse probleem.

Daar is nou net tweehonderd van die agthon-

derd manne oor. Samajoor Piet Terblanche met die bynaam van "Ou Fris Chris" het 'n plan. Hy stel voor dat hierdie Ou Manne moet teruggaan grens toe, maar hierdie keer met hulle eie rygoed. Ratels.

Samajoor Fris Chris was 'n rare karakter wat voorheen by 32 Bataljon was, en saam met nog snaakser mense soos Kol. Jan Breytenbach en Eddie Viljoen gefight het. Die troepe is dadelik tevrede, want vir die eerste keer in vier maande is hulle terug in hulle ou bekende karre. Samajoor Fris Chris is saam. Hy was nie eintlik 'n paradegrond Samajoor nie. Hy was 'n veldfighter wat in totaal 26 keer Grens toe was. 'n Opregte Ou Ramkat.

Vanaf 1978 word die aanvalle uit Angola al groter en meer waaghalsig. Die terroristegroepe wat deurbreek word baie groter. Ons trap meer myne af. In kort; Swapo word meer arrogant en oorlams en moet opgef@k word. Hulle het selfs



Samajoor Fris Chris sit die vorige dag se gebeure en bepeins.

‘n skoolbus gekaap met vrouens en kinders in. Ou PW en Pik Botha besluit dat die tyd aangebreek het vir ‘n moerse oorgrens fight om die vyand te berispe en ‘n bietjie op te f@k. Operasie Reindeer word beplan en begin vorm aanneem. Twee groot Swapo basisse word geteiken om aangeval te word. Chetequera so 30 km noord van die grens en Cassinga omtrent 250 km van die Kaplyn af. Die idee was dat die Parabats vir Cassinga moet bliksem en ons manne met die Ratels, wat nou ewe skielik die bakgat naam van Veggroep Juliet het, vernoem na Kmdt Joep Joubert, moet vir Chetequera opf@k. Dit moes gelyktydig gebeur.

Ons manne doen die in-oefening op Oshivelo. Oor en oor word dit geoefen met life ammo. Op Vrydag 28 April begin ons op te bom. Die voertuie word vir oulaas gecheck en vol diesel gegooi. Ammo word gelaai en die wapens word oor en oor skoongemaak en gecheck. Die troepe is bewurig van opgewondenheid en totaal ge-gear vir dit wat wag. Ons is wild, kort van draad en moer gevaarlik. Op hierdie stadium praat die Korporaals nie meer kak met hierdie Oumanne nie. ‘n Ouman weet wat sy

Job is. Jy hoef dit nie aan hom te beduie nie. Los ‘n f@kken Ouman uit!!

Die aanvalle sou op 1 Mei plaasvind. Dit word uitgestel. Ons sou toe op Sondag 1 Mei na Ondangwa beweeg maar dit word weer uitgestel vir 24 uur. Ons is befok. Jy sê nie vir ‘n troep om iets te doen, en sê dan vir hom om eers te wag nie. Maandag en Dinsdag word dit weer uitgestel. Ons diens weer alles en check weer alles.

Ons vertrek eers die Woensdag teen middernag na Ondangwa, Oshikati en Ombalantu waar weer diesel gegooi word. Daar word geslaap tot 6 uur die oggend. Ons vat weer die pad.

Intussen, op 3 Mei het die ses Alouette-Gunships, vanaf Rundu op Omabalantu geland waar hulle vir oulaas weer hulle gevegsorders deurwerk, sorg dat hulle alles honderd persent reg het en weer vol paraffien gooi. Choppers vlieg nie met diesel nie. Daar word tyd gemors met ‘n Ratel wat vasval. Dis ‘n moerse konvooi wat bestaan uit Ratels, Magirusse, Pantserkarre en goeters. Daardie tyd het die Ratels nog net 20 mm kanonne opgehad. Die 90 mm het



Lappies Labuschagne en Majoer André Kruger

eers later gekom.

Navigasie was 'n probleem. Daar was wel lugfoto's beskikbaar tot en met die eerste 16 km binne Angola. Daar was nog nie 'n ding soos 'n GPS nie. Majoor Ep van Lill lei die aanmars en is 'n Boffin wat navigasie aanbetref. Dit het ek al op De Brug gesien tydens ons opleiding. Hy lei die aanmars presies tot op die versamelpunt.

Die hoof Induna was Kmdt. Frank Bestbier. Sy tweede in bevel was Majoor André Kruger wat vlot in Afrikaans kon vloek. Selfs 'n Arabier sou sy bevele kon verstaan. Lappies Labuchagne was sy gunner. Staf Pagel Badenhorst was die hoofseiner in die bevelsratel. Ook geen wonder nie, want Staf Pagel was 'n moerse goeie seiner wat oral seine gehad het. Ek is tot vandag toe seker dat Staf Pagel se moerse besemsnor iets in gehad het wat sy seine sterker gemaak het. Ek glo dat hy elektriese krag uit 'n klip sou kon tap vir sy radio. Wat 'n interressante karakter.

Majoor Ep van Lill het Veggroep 1 aangevoer saam met die legendariese Samajoor Piet Terblanche (Ou Fris Chris). Carstens was hulle drywer. Majoor PW de Jager Veggroep 2 en Lt Mike Muller, Veggroep 3. Die ander onthou ek nie.

Net nadat ons die grens op 4 Mei teen omtrent 9 uur die oggend oorsteek, gebeur die eerste snaakse voorval. Dis Hemelvaartdag. Die konvooi stop op 'n baie klein dorpie. Al die inwoners hardloop weg want die vyand het blykbaar voorheen vir hulle vertel dat die SAW troepe moordenaars is en hulle vrouens gaan verkrag. Die wat te oud is om weg te hardloop gesels met Venancio Souza, ons mal 1 SAI Portugees. Hy stel hulle gerus en hulle word effens kalmer. Hy voer hulle dog biscuits.

Oorkant die straat sien hulle 'n Bank. 'n Baie klein geboutjie. Voorop geskrywe staan "The Bank of Lisbon." Een van die Troepe maak die fout om vir Souza te sê dat hy sy tjekboek moet vat en gou 'n paar rand vir hulle gaan trek. Souza en 'n pel stap toe soontoe. Toe hulle by die voordeur ingaan, glip die bankamptenare by



die agterdeur uit. Daai tyd het die banke nog nie sulke dik glasvensters gehad nie. Hy spring oor die toonbank en vat die twee blikasse. Hy maak die eerste een oop. Dis vol Angolese geld. Die tweede een is 'n gawe fonds; vol van daai ou groot Suid-Afrikaanse R10 note. Ou Jan van Riebeeck op die note smile vriendelik vir Souza.

Hy vat die twee tasse. Buite deel hy die Angolese geld sommer uit aan die oumense wat daar rondstaan. Hulle is baie bly. Die tas met die vrolike fotos van Jan van Riebeeck laai hy in sy Ratel. Later tel hy die geld en versteek dit in sy Kit. Dis R10 000. Dis 'n moerse klomp geld vir 'n Troep wat net R28.76 per maand verdien. Hy steel nie die geld nie, hy neem dit net in veilige bewaring.

Die Van Riebeeckgeld is nou veilig, die Oumense het die Angolese geld in veilige bewaring geneem en Souza besluit om later vir sy Suster ietsie mooi te koop want sy verjaar die dag. Die konvooi vertrek in die rigting van die versamelpunt.

Die versamelpunt is noord van Teiken Bravo, ook genoem Viëtnam. Die aanval moet van uit die noorde gebeur want die vyand se permanente grofgskut is vooraf opgestel na die Suidekant toe. By die versamelpunt aangekom, moet gewag word en die aanval word ver-

traag want die hoofskakeloffisier van die Lugmag, wat saam met Majoor Van Lill was, kry nie koms met sy Pilots nie. Die Pilots is laat. Die vliegtuie moet eers die basis met 'n klomp bomme gooi voordat die aanval kan begin .

Dis hier waar iemand vir Danie Grobler roep om te sê dat sy Ratel aan die agterkant brand. Hy en sy Gunner, Piet Otto met die groot ore spring uit met 'n brandblusser. By die heel laaste luik kom 'n digte klomp rook uit. Die Ratel brand toe nie . Dis al die tyd toe Jackson en sy tjommies wat sit en boom rook om spoed te vang vir die fight wat voorlê. Hulle het sommer 'n klompie surplus zolle gerol vir gebruik tydens die geveg wat voorlê. Die zolle is so dik soos my duim en so lank soos 'n sigaar. Grobler en Otto nies elkeen drie keer van die rook en klim terug met hulle brandblusser.

Die ses gunships is nou ook al in formasie oppad. Een van hulle word gevlieg deur Lt. Rene Du Toit. Terwyl hulle so in aantog is, kom die vegvliegtuie op boomtophoogte van agter af by hulle verby en Lt du Toit dink so by homself, 'daar kom die kak nou.'

Ewe skielik verskyn twee Buccaneers met 'n helse spoed. Hulle looi die vyandelike basis met duisend pond bomme. Maak 'n windgat summersualt en gooi nog bomme en vertrek so vinnig as wat hulle gekom het. Die Ratels wat tussen vyf en tien km wegstaan, bewo van die hewige ontploffing.

Kmdt Bestbier gee die bevel om te move. Toe ons begin beweeg kry Majoor Van Lill so 'n koue gevoel langs sy ruggraat. Toe hy omkyk gewaar hy vier Canberras wat op boomtophoogte verskyn. Die bombuise is klaar oop. Hulle laai ook hulle vrag af en die aarde skud weer. Die Manne vertrek nou met 'n spoed om die aanval te doen.

Twee Pantserkarre beweeg saam. Die idee is dat die Pantserkarre vroeër moet stop om onder steuningsvuur te lewer met hulle 90mm kanonne, want op daai stadium was die grootste kanon op 'n Ratel 'n 20 mm kanon. Ook baie gevaarlik en vinnig, maar vir sekere goed

is sy gat te lig.

Sommer met die intrapslag loop dinge effens skeef, want die twee pantserkarre beweeg te vinnig vooruit en gaan staan te ver vorentoe binne die aanvalzone. Hulle word so te sê onmiddelik uitgeskiet en Bridgeland en Truebody sneuwel. Die wêreld lê besaai met mense wat dood en gewond is deur die vliegtuie. Die res staan verbaas rond en hoes en proes om te probeer agterkom wat nou net met hulle gebeur het. Totaal deur die kak geskrik.

Dis dan ook vir hierdie rede dat die Ratels vinnig met die aanval kan begin want die vyand se grofgeskut is gekonsentreer op die twee Pantserkarre.

Op presies dieselfde tyd begin die ses Gunships ook op die vyand in die loopgrawe skiet. Lt Du Toit se Gunship is toegerus met 'n dubbelloop 50 mm Browning. Sy Gunner maai onder die vyand. Jy sien net kak en hare.

Die Ratels begin vasval want die hele Basis is vol tunnels en loopgrawe wat bo-op onsigbaar gemaak is met grond en takke.

Danie Grobler dryf Ratel 31B. Sy Troepe wat netnou nog gesit en 'n paar surplus Daggazolle gedraai het , sit nou sommer bo-op die Ratels en skiet die kak uit die vyand uit. Dik Boomzolle in die bek . Dit lyk komplete asof hulle boshodens aan die brand is. Witwarm gerook maar hulle bly skiet en rig 'n baie groot vewoesting aan. As die PF's dit raakgesien het sou hulle die Troepe seker later met Dagga ge-issue het.

Grobler trap baie van die vyand dood maar dinge gebeur so vinnig dat hy dit nie eers besef nie. Hy besef dit eers baie later in hulle tuisbasis toe hy al die bloed, kak en harsings onder sy Ratel moes uitspuit. Intussen kap Wynand Calitz en sy mede mortieriste die vyand wat probeer ontvlug vanuit die suide.

Die langgat, Marcel Kemp is bevelvoerder van Ratel 11A. Hy sien ook amper sy gat sommer

met die intrapslag. Sy Ratel se spoed is te min om deur 'n loopgraaf te kom. Die Drywer reverse en kom weer vorentoe met meer spoed. 'n Terroris kom regop in die loopgraaf en net daar trap hulle hom moertoe. Net hierna gee sy gunner, ene Coolan se kanon 'n probleem. Dit red Kemp se lewe want hy sak met sy lang gat terug in die toring om vir Coolan te help. Die ding het 'n storig. Hy cock die wapen met die ratchet .

Net toe hy weer wou uitkyk, skiet die vyand sy sigblok en sights moertoe reg voor sy gesig. Hy skrik sy gat af. Voor hulle is nog 'n paar van die vyand en hulle word geskiet dat hulle sommer so bump op die sand. Skuins voor hulle is 'n bunker. Hulle looi die bunker met vyf HE rondtes. Jy sien net vlamme, rook, derms en hare.

Die aanval is effens deurmekaar want elke Ratel wil nou sommer sy eie oorlog voer en wyk af van die aanvalsorders. Majoor Ep van Lill raak bemoerd. Baie vyand word doodgetrap. Jan Verster is die voorbok met hierdie gejagery. Later moes die Tiffies die dooie mense van sy Ratel se Propshafts af lossny met messe en sae.

Op hierdie stadium word Majoor van Lill se Ratel tot stilstand gedwing. Hidroliese transmissie- pype is afgeskiet. Hy klim oor op sy

tweede in bevel, Lt Olivier se Ratel. Dis waarvandaan hy nou sy bevel voer. Hy staan in die toring , is befok oor die Troepe nie die aanvalsorders reg volg nie, maar in sy hart voel hy lekker want hy kan sien sy troepe se tweejaar opleiding was goed. Ons Manne veg uit die boeke uit - vreesloos en wild. Majoor Van Lill het later gesê daai dag het hy oorlog soos in 'n flik gekyk.

Op 'n stadium was hy stom van verbasing. Die Ratel langs hom se deur gaan oop en 'n troep klim doodluiters uit en stap op 'n terroris af wat hom point met sy AK 47. Hy sien hier kom kak en kak die Troep uit. Die Troep is moer groot (ek het sy naam vergeet). Hy het hande so groot soos boutroffels.

Die volgende oggend kry Majoor Van Lill die Troep.

“Wat gaan met jou aan dat jy so op die man afstap as hy reeds op jou mik? Is jy dan mal?”

“ Ek het gesien sy AK het gestoor Majoor. Sy geweer was gefok. Ek wou hom graag net eers 'n P-klap gee!”

Majoor Van Liill smile skelm, draai om en loop weg. Hy besef weereens die waarde van



sy manne. Intussen word Salvage raak geskiet. Daar is eers later na sy wond omgesien.

Die vyandelike lugafweer gunners probeer hard om die Gunships af te skiet maar Lt Du Toit en die vyf ander Pilots is te rats vir hulle. Hierdie manne weet hoe om 'n chopper te laat dans en duik in die lug. Hierdie Gunships saai groot verwoesting. Die samewerking tussen Pilot en Gunner is ongelooflik.

Lappies Labuchagne, Majoor André Kruger se gunner, kry self 'n moerse klomp mooi skote in. Hy sien 'n man agter 'n lugafweerwapen en skiet sy kop af met sy 20 mm kanon. Die vyandelike wapen swyg.

Gavin Forster (Vossie) en sy Ratelspan rig ook groot verwoesting aan. Hy is 'n vreeslose ou met 'n moerse neus. Net om na hom te kyk word jy al bang. Hy en sy maats vang 'n klomp van die vyand, vat hulle wapens af en gaan voort met die geveg. Dis eintlik vreesaanjaend. Oral is rook, stof, verwondes, lyke en onherkenbare stukke mens. Die gegil van verwondes en banges is soos 'n koor sonder 'n dirigent.

Teen laat namiddag, na afloop van die geveg tydens doelwit opruiming, gebeur daar ook snaakse goed. Oral is nog gate en bunkers waar van die vyand skuil. Daar word handgranate ingegooi en daar word nog baie van die vyand doodgeskiet. Samajoor Fris Chris sien hoedat 'n troep 'n M26 handgranaat in 'n bunker gooi. Die Terrs vang die granaat en gooi dit dadelik weer terug. Die troep klap die granaat soos 'n begaafde tennisspeler weer terug. Die granaat ontplof net bokant die gat. Almal in die gat is dood en die troep het net 'n skrapnelwond aan sy hand.

Danie Grobler en sy trawante ry laat namiddag by 'n klein dammetjie verby. Hulle sien twee riete wat verdag lyk. Hy loop in, pluk die riete op en wat gebeur? Twee terroriste wat daar geskuil het en met die riete asem gehaal het, hulle versuip amper. Danie bliksem hulle verskriklik en neem hulle ook gevange.

Die mal Potugees, Venancio Souza en sy manne ontdek 'n ondergrondse bunker met 'n moerse klomp kos in. Noorweegse vis, wat baie lekker is. Dit weet ons want die vorige jaar het ons al van dit by die Nonne op St. Mary's Mission vir ons gevat. Baie lekker en voedsaam. Daar is kondensmelk uit Swede wat baie geeler en soeter is as die kondensmelk wat ons ken. Dit proe amper asof heuningbye gehelp het met die maak daarvan. Daar is ook lekker blikke ham vanuit Holland en verskeie ander soorte ingeblikte kos.

Die snaakste van alles is die geblikte groente met die Suid-Afrikaanse KOO handelsmerk op. Dis geblik in Ceres onder in die Kaap. Daar is 'n hawestempel op van die Luanda hawe. Op die bokse is 'n dokument wat aantoon dat dit geskenk is deur die NG - Sending genootskap van Suid Afrika. So as die ou bliksemse NG Predikant vir ons ouers deurkollekte vra vir kos, voer jou Pa eintlik die vyand. Die wêreld is eintlik 'n snaakse plek.

Baie kos, ammo, voertuie, wapens, kit, radios en belangrike dokumente word gebuit. Die Troepe beloon hulle somer self vir hulle puik vertoning. Hulle vat die gevange vyand en die lyke se geld, ringe, horlosies en aandenkings soos bajonette en kit. In die hiernamaals het jy nie geld nodig nie en vir wat sal jy nou wil kyk hoe laat dit is? - reken Wynand Calitz.

(Later terug in 1 SAI het Grobler sy surplus horlosies vir 'n moerse wins aan die Rowers verkoop want hy sê hulle het toe kwaai gesuip en het geld nodig gehad.)

Kmdt Bestbier wil die dooies getel hê. Hoe doen jy dit? Dis eintlik baie maklik. As die lyk klaar getel is, trek die troep 'n kring met 'n stok om hom. Die volgende troep weet dan dat hy klaar getel is. Oor die vierhonderd is dood en gevang. Daar was later ook baie gestry oor hoeveel terroriste in die basis was. Samajoor Fris Chris het die regte antwoord want hy het hulle roll call-boek gevat. Daar was om presies reg te wees 1094 van hulle.

Die verwoesting is voltooi en die Gunships kom land ook. Van die die bemanning knoop dadelik hulle flying-suits los en staan rond om te pis want in die lug is nie pislek nie. Hulle kan ook nie kort-kort by 'n boom stop nie. Ek vermoed hulle het moerse blase. 'n Veggroep Luitenant kom aangestap na die een pilot, Lt Du Toit.

“Jy het amper jou gat gesien. Ons het van onder af gesien hoe die lugafweer tracers jou wentelbane volg en al nader kom. Die gunner het jou tricks begin agterkom. Met die volgende sarsie sou jy definitief gekak het. Kom kyk gou hier.”

Die Veggroep Luitenant vat vir Lt Du Toit na 'n verwoeste lugafweerstelling toe waar die koplose gunner lê. Hy vat die volgende rondte uit die belt en gee dit vir die Pilot. “Vat dit saam huistoe want hierdie een het jou naam op gehad!”

Voor sononder verlaat ons Chetequera. Die plek is totaal verwoes en opgef@k. Daar is niks meer oor nie. Die konvooi met gebuite goed en vlugteling is baie groot. Ons voertuie is maar gehawend geskiet. Andries de Necker se Ratel het net drie stywe tyres. Sommige voertuie moet gesleep word.

'n Paar km weg gaan ons manne in 'n tydelike basis om te oornag. Dit was 'n besige namiddag maar niemand kry eintlik geslaap nie want die gevangenis probeer steeds ontvlug.

Die volgende oggend is dit die 5de Mei, Jan Verster verjaar. Hy was toe 19 jaar oud. Hy voel ontevrede omdat die kokke nie vir hom 'n koek gebak het vir sy verjaarsdag nie. Hy wil ook graag ietsie aansink vir sy dorre keel wat nog droog is en brand van gister se rook en stof. Johnny Channer lawe hom met 'n vuurwarm bier wat hy in sy Ratel opspoor.

'n Goeie troep deel altyd met sy maats, al is dit ook nou jou heel laaste bier.

Dieselfde dag begin die groot terugtog na Os-hivelo. Daar aangekom spring daar ook vier Angolese Boerbokke uit Vossie se Ratel. 'n Superjags rammetjie en drie mooi jong ooitjies. Hy

is van mening dat 'n bokboerdery groot winste kan oplewer. Samajoor Fris Chris kyk met 'n blinde oog na die bokke; skud sy kop, smile en loop weg. Omtrent almal word die aand stormdronk en gesuip. Jan Verster geniet nou sy verjaarsdag terdeë. Van die manne suip so baie en kots hulle longe uit. Dis snaakse stink kots, gemeng met Noorweegse vis, Sweedse kondensmelk en Brandewyn.

Daar was geen onderlinge bakleiery nie want die oorlog het ons broederskap groter en sterker gemaak.

**

Terug in Rundu by die Lugmagbasis gaan Lt Du Toit direk tandarts toe. Nie omdat hy tandpyn het nie, maar omdat hy weet dat die tandarts 'n graveerpen het. Die tandarts graveer Lt Du Toit se naam op die rondte wat anyway sy naam op gehad het.



Maj Andre Kruger en Kmdt Frank Bestbier

**

Venanccio Souza, die man wat R10 000 verdien vir die fight, se kak is nog nie verby nie. Hy moet die geld verby die MP's kry in Grootfontein voordat hulle Tempe toe gaan. Souza het altyd 'n plan. Hy is 'n Troep wat vindingryk is. Hy haal sy dertien R1 magasyn se springs uit, vou die R10 note net mooi op so groot as wat die magasyn is en prop die geld daarin. Hy skuif die geld weer toe met daai boonste plaatjie. Op Grootfontein word hulle kit deur die MP's gecheck. Hulle kyk ook na Souza se magasyn om te sien of hy nie ammo gesteel het nie. Hulle gee sy magasyn terug.

In 1 SAI tel Venancio Souza sy 'Bospay'. Hy sit dit in sy kit en huke daarmee Johannesburg toe. Hy vat wel 'n moerse mes saam vir selfverdediging indien iemand op die pad hom sou probeer uitskud en beroof. Na die lang welverdiende pas kom Souza met 'n splintenuwe Ford Estcourt wat hy in Johannesburg gekoop het, in Tempe aangery.

Ek vermoed dis die grootste enkele bedrag BOSPAY wat 'n soldaat ooit verdien het.



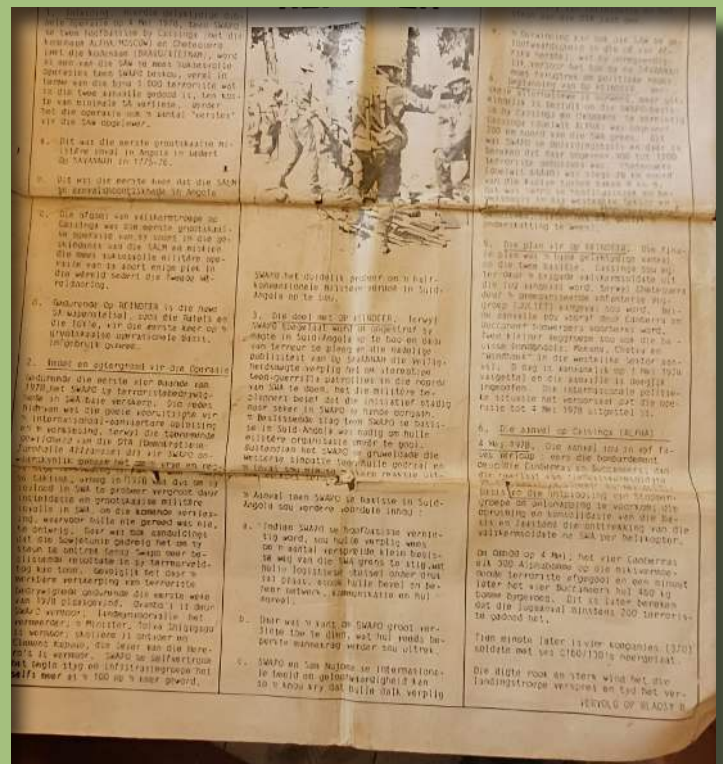
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Hoe Troep X (ek noem nie name nie) dit reggekry het weet ek nie, maar vandag het hy sy gebuite AK 47 wettig op sy naam. Nogals gelisensieer. Daar is op daardie dag ook 'n hele paar Russies pistole en bajonette onder die MP's se neuse verby.

'n 1 SAI Ouman bly 'n innoverende ding.

**

Vyf jaar later in 1983 word Wynand Calitz weer opgeroep vir 'n drie maande kamp. Vir die soveelste keer slaap hy weer in daai vuil deurgangskamp. Die plek is nog meer in sy moer en baie vuiler. Hy gaan lê op die vuil bed en voel 'n ding in die matras se pisvel. Hy dog dis 'n Scope. Hy haal dit uit. Dis toe 'n baie ou koerantjie met die naam van 'Bospos'. Op die voorblad lees hy toe die berig oor Operasie Reindeer, vyf jaar tevore.



**

Nou onlangs met 'n kuiertjie, tuur Samajoer Fris Chris in die verte. Ek kan sien die Ou se kop loop ver draaie.

"Jy weet Spirrie. Ou Ep van Lill was een van die beste Kompaniebevelvoerders met wie ek ooit saamgevoer het. Hy was 'n briljante fighter!"

AN ODE TO JULIET

With Apologies to William Shakespeare

*It was one hot ascension day
We left our work, our songs and play
To cross the border and fight a war
To find the terrorist and raise our score
We travelled far, yet our attack was swift
Our losses were to be low, this was God's gift*

*The Elands, though tough, suffered a loss
The mighty Ratels showed the enemy who's boss
Metal birds attacked, on wings of steel
Their bullets and bombs the enemy did feel
The attack was merciless, our men were brave
And for the enemy the defeat was grave*

*When the battle was over, the medics took over
Helping one and all
No wound to small, no task too great
Towards the enemy they showed no hate*

*We returned with honour, grace and pride
Each one of us had helped turn the tide
of Communism, terrorism of those we hate
of those who dare to threaten our state*

*No obvective too large, our enemy we get
We are the men of Battlegroup Juliet*

S F Nash - Medic 1978

61 MVV Inisiatief - Storms van die lewe

Een van die doelstellings toe die 61 Meg Veteranevereniging gestig is in 2008, was om ons veterane wat op soek mag wees na finaliteit of “closure”, by te staan met hierdie proses. Dit kan op verskillende maniere gebeur, met die maklikste beginpunt seker om ‘n skouerskuur in jou omgewing by te woon en kontak te maak met ander manne wat verstaan, en met begrip kan luister na jou stories.

Soms is dit net nodig om die regte inligting te kry wat jou kan help om die storms van die lewe te trotseer, want niemand van ons leef in ‘n stormlose wêreld nie.

Die 61 Meg Veteranevereniging gaan saam met Dr Roelf Schoeman van Elèhos, wat aan baie van ons al bekend is, asook Nicole Dickson, ‘n behoorlike program instel om ons makkers by te staan. Sodra dit deurge trap is, sal ons meer inligting daaroor deurgee.

Ons een gedagte is om manne of vrouens vanuit die skouerskure te nooi om die opleiding as fasiliteerder te ondergaan, sodat daar iemand is in die skouerskuur wat kan help, en indien dit nodig is, kan help om verdere hulp te kan kry wat nie by die skouerskuur moontlik is nie.

Dr R Schoeman

Dit is ‘n wêreldwye tendens dat sommige oorlogsveterane ná aftrede aanpassingsprobleme ervaar. Nuwe storms van die lewe soos krisis, gebroke verhoudinge, misdaad en traumatiese ervaringe wat tans toenemend in Suid Afrika voorkom, kan onverwerkte oorlogsverwante trauma vererger.

Professionele berading is nie altyd nodig om negatiewe ervaringe van storms van die lewe te verwerk nie. ‘n Veilige omgewing om oor ont-nugterings soos die onverwagte diagnose met kanker of ‘n ander siekte, die skielike dood van ‘n geliefde of kinders wat in die buiteland gaan woon het, kan help.



Elèhos Bediening het ‘n ondersteuningspakket vir veteraneverenigings ontwikkel waarmee ons 61 Meg-veterane en hulle families kan ondersteun om nie net die storms van die

Photo Credit - Crosswalk.com



verlede te verwerk nie, maar ook toegerus te word om toekomstige storms beter te trotseer.

Ons het besef daar is veterane wat as vrywilligers hulle makkers wil ondersteun, maar nie weet hoe nie. Met die Hersteldinamika ondersteuningspakket bemagtig ons reeds veteranever-enigings om hulle veterane en families wat uitdagingservaar, in hulle eie kontekste ondersteun.

Die ondersteuningspakket fokus op die ontwikkeling van holistiese ondersteuningsnetwerke in plaaslike gemeenskappe wat individuele-, groeps- en professionele holistiese ondersteuning vir veterane en hulle families beskikbaar stel. Ons stel In-persoon en Aanlynopleiding in die ontwikkeling van holistiese ondersteuningsnetwerke en individuele en groepsondersteuning vir vrywilligers beskikbaar. Die doel met die opleiding is om vrywilligers op te lei om veterane landwyd en selfs internasionaal te kan ondersteun.

Die aanlyn Recovery after Storms of life ondersteuningsproses word na die Covid 19 pandemie elke kwartaal met groot sukses aangebied. Die kursus is 'n uitbreiding van ons Hersteldinamika groepsondersteuningsproses wat reeds die afgelope 20 jaar aangebied word.

Toe ek in 2011 op soek was na 'n veilige omgewing om my eie oorlogsverwante trauma te verwerk, het my paaie met Gert Minnaar en Genl Dippies Dippenaar gekruis. Met skouer-skuur geleenthede wat ons saam aangebied het en die ander geleenthede soos die besoek aan Angola in 2018, het ek genesing ervaar en ook ervaring opgedoen in die ondersteuning van veterane. Dit is dus vir my 'n voorreg om ons dienste vir 61 Meg Veteraneverenig beskikbaar te stel.

<https://elehos.co.za/>

[0834001571](https://elehos.co.za/)

Uittreksel

Post-apartheid veterane se soeke na afsluiting: 'n Outo-etnografiese pastorale benadering Deur Dr R.P.G. Schoeman

Graham (2017:4) identifiseer die volgende bronne vir die genesing van die gewonde psige:

- *samewerking;*
- *om die waarheid te vertel;*
- *vergifnis en versoening.*

Graham se idee van collaborative conversations en mutual dialogue is veral van waarde in hierdie studie. Kennis word gegenereer in die interaksie wat plaasvind in 'n intensionele gesprek. Gesprek het die voordeel dat dit verrassende nuwe insigte na vore bring, 'n nuwe gevoel van "om te behoort tot" (belonging) skep en weer die ervaring van verbondenheid met die lewe (connection in living) vir die veteraan tot stand bring. In gesprek word die leemtes in die verhaal ontdek en geïntegreer. Lewenslange gevolge van trauma en selfs gevolge oor generasies heen, moet met die ondersteuning van veterane in ag geneem word.

Gesprekvoering fokus op die verhaal self en die sterkpunte van die verteller. Dit is nie diagnosties van aard nie. Dit is nie terapeuties in die sin dat heling die hoofdoel is nie, maar eerder die deel en dra van mekaar se laste (sharing and bearing).

Om verhale in die groep te deel, help om die persoonlike verhaal te verwerk en die verlede te evalueer. 'n Pastorale gespreksgenoot kan aan komplekse onderwerpe aandag gee en 'n kultuur van versorging in gemeenskappe skep waarby veterane baat kan vind. Die persoon self is die kundiges op die gebied van die eie ervaring. Die persoon self besluit hoe om die eie ervaring te interpreteer en hoeveel daarvan om te deel.

Selfkennis en identiteit word ontdek in gesprek met vriende, familie, spirituele leiers medeveterane en die breër gemeenskap. Gesprekke is vloeibaar. Met 'n verskeidenheid gespreksgenote kan gesprekke 'n nuwe wending neem en nuwe dimensies van identiteit en nuwe sosiale verhoudings kan ontdek word.

Contemporary Defence Issues

This is the opinion of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of 61 MVA.

SANDF at 30:

Modise highlights the SANDF's role in national and international security

Abridged Article. (Source: DEFENCEWEB - Sam Basch - 20th May 2024)

In a wide-ranging media briefing on Sunday 19 May, Minister of Defence and Military Veterans, Thandi Modise, outlined the state of defence in the country 30 years after the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) came into existence.

“Thirty years on, the country can look back with pride on the achievements and challenges since the dawn of democracy and the establishment of the SANDF,” she said. “The SANDF has become the defence force of the nation fully representative of its people.”

“A first initiative was to transform the gender, racial and cultural landscape of the new defence force, as the military could hardly be defenders of the democracy if it did not reflect its values,” the minister said.

South Africa’s participation in international obligations and peace support operations, while sometimes reluctant or obligatory, has significantly enhanced the capabilities of its national defense force.

Since 1994, South Africa has actively supported government policies by participating in over 15 peace missions worldwide. These missions, including those with the United Nations (UN) and African Union (AU), have spanned countries such as Lesotho, Burundi, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Comoros, and Liberia, providing invaluable real-world experience to South African troops.

South Africa maintains two military contingents in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The United Nations Organization Sta-

bilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) contingent will depart later this year. Additionally, South Africa has deployed approximately one-third of its 2,900-person contingent to the Southern African Development Community (SADC)-led force.

Minister of Defense and Military Veterans Thandi Modise has refuted media reports regarding insufficient resources, including medical facilities, sanitation, and fresh provisions, for the deployed soldiers. She stated that these reports are inaccurate, and fresh produce is procured within the DRC.

Logistical support for the SADC-led mission (SAMIDRIC) is the responsibility of the SADC. The charter of Russian and Angolan Ilyushin Il-76 transport aircraft for logistical operations is financed by the SADC.

Minister Modise highlighted some of the SANDF’s support for domestic security, saying it had returned to border safeguarding in 2010. Army sub-units are currently deployed in border safeguarding in the Limpopo, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Northern Cape and North-West provinces. Border safeguarding also includes maritime patrols, involving the South African Navy’s new patrol boats, which will soon be augmented by an additional vessel.

The SANDF also provides support to the South African Police Service (SAPS), with interventions to combat gang violence in the Western Cape province, truck torching and sabotage of strategic installations.

The minister was emphatic that the SANDF was now prepared for civil upheavals like the 2021 July unrest and would be ready to assist the SAPS in preventing similar incidents.

“The SANDF has been working with COGTA (department of cooperative government and

traditional affairs) and the national Treasury on disaster management,” she explained.

The Minister highlighted the defense budget, emphasizing the South African National Defence Force’s (SANDF) growth and contributions over the past three decades. With the incoming administration, the department is actively reviewing the budget, internally and in consultation with the President, who has been briefed on the 2015 Defence Review and its proposals. The Minister expressed optimism about the future of defense funding.

This is the opinion of the author and does not necessarily reflect the views of 61 MVA.

SANDF underfunded, overstretched, and in need of clear direction

Abridged Article. (Source: DEFENCEWEB - Guy Martin - 21st May 2024)

According to Ricardo Teixeira South Africa’s foreign policy is confused, with no clear plan on the deployment of an underfunded, overstretched and old South African National Defence Force (SANDF).

Teixeira started out by saying South Africa has a wonderful Constitution, but its national security priorities need to be redefined in a constantly changing world. He said South Africans must ask what they need and want as a country, as “South Africa’s foreign policy has been all over the place. We’ve had some successes, some failures...With regard to the deployment to the DRC, government has done a bad job informing the public why that deployment is necessary.”

Highlighting the vulnerability of South Africa’s vast maritime domain, Teixeira expressed concern over the country’s limited resources to combat maritime crime. He stated, ‘We need to acknowledge the risks we face. Our extensive coastline, stretching over 1.5 million square kilometers within our exclusive economic zone, is immense. Yet, we only have three naval ves-

sels to patrol this vast area.’ He emphasized the challenge posed by smugglers and other criminals operating within South African waters.

Teixeira highlighted a concerning trend of relying heavily on the military for tasks traditionally assigned to other government agencies. He asserted that the military is increasingly tasked with responsibilities such as combating illegal mining, securing borders, and safeguarding infrastructure, duties often considered the purview of law enforcement.

Despite the military’s growing workload, Teixeira argued that their budget is shrinking while the police force, despite its perceived shortcomings, receives consistent funding increases. This situation, he claimed, forces the SANDF to shoulder responsibilities that fall outside their core mandate, creating a strain on their resources and potentially undermining their primary defense functions.

ONTHOU OM TE ONTHOU

OPERATION SCEPTIC - SMOKESHELL 44TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION BLOEMFONTEIN

Programme

Friday 7 June 2024

From 18.00 Bring and Braai at Club Omuthiya (1SSB).

Saturday 8 June 2024

At 11.00 Parade, “geel messie” presentation, wreath laying.
Afternoon and evening Spit braai at the Tractor museum.

Sunday 9 June 2024

Morning Breakfast for those that are able to make it (venue to be announced).

Please note that this year’s event is for Smokeshell veterans and invited guests only.

Two sheep have again been donated for the Spit braai and our Bloemfontein veterans will organise salads.

Tea and coffee will be provided at Club Omuthiya after the parade on Saturday.

We have negotiated a discounted rate for accommodation at Reyneke Park.

61 MVV Gauteng Skouerskuur

Oop uitnodiging:

Alle militere veterane organisasies, familie en vriende is welkom

Saterdag 8 Junie 2024, 11:00-16:00

Cottesloe Cottages Shelhole (Bring en Braai)

Previous 6 April



61 MVV Wes Kaap Skouerskuur

Oop uitnodiging:

Alle militere veterane organisasies, familie en vriende is welkom

Saterdag 8 Junie 2024, 11:00-16:00.

Blaauwberg Cuca Moth Shellhole Killarney Raceway

61meg Skouerskuur

Herdenking Ops Sceptic (Smokeshell)

Kontant Kroeg Met Kaart Fasiliteit

Burgers/Bacon & Egg Rolls/Toasted Cheese & Tomato Sal Te Koop Wees

Brian Dyason 072 997 7890 Bradley Futter 078 176 1977

VERJAARDAG WENSE / BIRTHDAY WISHES



Verjaarsdae vir die maand van Junie volgens die informasie beskikbaar op die 61 Meg se databasis.

Help asseblief om dit opgedateer te hou.

Die Veertigers

Johannes Ras Stone		1941-06-20
Johann Dippenaar	1	1944-06-18
Leopold Scholtz	+	1948-06-30

Die Vyftigers

Jannie van Graan	1951-06-24	Henk Delport	1965-06-12
Anthony Turton	1954-06-23	Paul Stone	1965-06-13
Matthys Rall	1954-06-28	Flip van Wyk	1965-06-13
Neels Nel	1956-06-03	Dietmar Dedekind	1966-06-01
Martin Mc Keen	1956-06-10	George Beveridge	1966-06-17
Christiaan Greeff	1956-06-12	Michael Voulelis	1966-06-29
Jaap Steyn	1956-06-13	Daniel Potgieter	1967-06-03
Peter Vosloo	1956-06-24	Brad Saunders	1967-06-07
Neville Bowden	1958-06-19	Coenraad Johannes Bierman	1967-06-09
Ben Smit	1959-06-16	Theuns Cloete	1967-06-25
		Herman Kitshoff	1968-06-10
		Sarel Jansen van Vuuren	1968-06-13
		Johannes Petrus Bingle de Beer	1969-06-07
		Eugene Robert Magson	1969-06-22
		Quintus van der Merwe	1969-06-23
		Terrance Ievers	1969-06-24

Die Sestigters

Arthur Cameron	1960-06-12
Denis Alan Ing	1960-06-17
Ariel Hugo	1960-06-23
Andre' Kleynhans	1961-06-04
Bruce Andrew James MacFarlane	1961-06-09
William Endley	1961-06-13
Toffie Grove	1961-06-13
Gert Jacobus van der Merwe	1961-06-13
Kevin West	1961-06-16
Berthold Otto Meyer	1961-06-17
Roelof Frederik de Haan	1961-06-19
Rico De Piaz	1961-06-20
Noel Coetzee	1962-06-05
Jan Venter	1962-06-19
J J Myburgh	1962-06-20
Attie (AJH) Lamprecht	1962-06-25
John McCrum	1962-06-25
Ray Pierce	1963-06-07
Attie Johannes Adriaan van Niekerk	1963-06-10
Allen [Gush] Stiebel	1963-06-11
Douglas Armstrong	1963-06-14
Le Roux Pieter Roux	1964-06-25
Pieter Bezuidenhout	1964-06-28
Gary Hayes	1964-06-30
Rob Nash	1965-06-03
WJS van der Merwe	1965-06-06
Ronald Klipp	1965-06-08
Gerrit Kotze	1965-06-09

Die Sewentigers

Manuel Dos Santos	1970-06-07
Ronnie Dibb	1970-06-14
Andre van der Berg	1972-06-15
Peter Burger	1974-06-07
Gerrie van Tonder	1974-06-10
Piet Streicher	1977-06-30

Die Tagtigers en aan

Mari Immelman	1980-06-09
James Snell	1990-06-14

The “Skurwe Hande” An Officer Commanding Perspective

*Extract from “Eye of the Firestorm”
Roland de Vries (Chapter 8, On Leadership
and Command)*



Captain Payne and Rough Hands - Cometh the Moment Cometh the man....

I learned my fair portion of life's lessons from the plight of 'Captain Payne' and the 'Rough Hands' with 61 Mech at Omuthiya and in southern Angola. The 'Rough Hands' were to be deployed with 61 Mech in the field during an eventful August 1981 in Angola, 17 km east of Cahama. The mentioned lessons taught me something about destiny and providence.

They assuredly taught me lessons in humility, humanity and about other forms of dignity and how to be thankful for small mercies and lit-

tle things in life. Furthermore, they taught me about simple leadership traits and what loyalty truly meant when experiencing dire straits and life to the full. After I had had the privilege of meeting Captain Payne and the Rough Hands I valued my own children and my young troops at 61 Mech more.

Rough Hands literally referred to the people we had in uniform in the erstwhile SADF who worked extremely hard with their bare hands. In Afrikaans, they were referred to as the 'Skurwe Hande'. They literally provided a major portion of manual labour to the defence force. They were people who did compulsory nation-

al service and came from questionable walks of life. Most of them were trouble and had a history of drug addiction while some were outright criminals with dossiers as long as my arm. They were not in the force to bear arms or to render operational service – this in fact was totally forbidden for obvious reasons. Not being entrusted to bear arms they were good for manual labour only.

Their home was the Engineer Corps in Kroonstad where they were schooled in the tricks of manual trade. As a rule of thumb they could cause disciplinary nightmares in a jiffy, but amongst them I have found some crown jewels. It was late July 1981 at Omuthiya, and I had just received my warning order for 61 Mech that Operation Protea, which was scheduled for August, was going to happen.

All preparations and planning for the operation unfolded in utmost secrecy and our planning maps were marked with code words and nicknames. One of the military targets given to 61 Mech by the military planners in Windhoek was ‘Apple Pie’, a small town called Humbe situated approximately 8km west of Xangongo and the Cunene River. About 45 km further to the north-west lay the town of Cahama which was home to a mechanised mobile reserve of FAPLA.

I knew that if the bulk of 61 Mech left Omuthiya for Operation Protea I would need extra hands to look after and maintain our base. Such work entailed kitchen and messing fatigues, ablutions cleaning, maintenance of the evaporation dams of our sewage system and daily refuse removal trips with our trusted captured Russian Gaz truck. It was important work that had to be done, even if it was not very pleasant and becoming to professional soldiers.

I therefore sent a telex message to Army HQ in Pretoria to request additional hands at Omuthiya for base maintenance – I did not reckon on the Skurwe Hande or on the influence they were going to exert on my life and that of a few other people at 61 Mech.

The Skurwe Hande subsequently arrived at Grootfontein in a luxurious C-130 Hercules transport aircraft – a first for them. With them was Captain Payne their undisputed informal leader – no questions asked or margins set. He was sitting, as I learned later from him, calmly relaxing in the red jump seat of the C-130, completely confident in his own personal strength, ability and authority. They did not know a hell where they were going or what they were letting themselves in for... Sergeant Major ‘Valie’ went to receive them (and a big surprise) at Grootfontein Airfield.

Their 16 x 32 Khaki-coloured tent was pitched to the east of the base, somewhat removed from the operational sub-units who were obviously, as well-trained operational hands, a cut above the rest. The scene was set and something unforgettable was going to happen in the lives of twelve unsuspecting Skurwe Hande and an equally unsuspecting 61 Mech. Meeting with surprises was the spice of life at 61 Mech.

The Skurwe Hande became a regular sight at Omuthiya and we got used to them – they were in a new comfort zone. In their sweaty, dirty nutria overalls they were cleaning the base, driving the Russian Gaz truck, removing the rubbish, wandering down to maintain the evaporation dam with brooms, spades and rakes – as per strictly laid down base routine and maintenance instructions.

Their tent was regularly inspected by the staunch RSM M.C. Barnard and amicable Warrant Officer Class 1 Valie. Valie was the Base Maintenance Manager. While the Skurwe Hande were slogging away, we were busy with the more serious real stuff of professional soldiering – driving north out of Omuthiya with our Ratels and exercising repeatedly on the training range with live ammunition for the oncoming operation – and coming back exhausted in the evenings, but totally content with ourselves and extremely satisfied with our progress. Contentment was shared having a cold beer at our canteen at Omuthiya as the sun was setting. Some nights we were out in the field, exercising our

night manoeuvres and navigation and movement skills. Meanwhile the Skurwe Hande was left in peace to do things Skurwe Hande do.

One day however a subtle change occurred: My sub-unit commanders informed me that we had serious trouble. This was not long after Payne and his team of eleven base labourers, with extremely rough hands, had arrived on the scene. Some of our troops were lying in our sickbay. They had sustained serious wounds encountered during the darkness of the previous night. It happened again the next night. Nobody, but nobody was talking or shedding light on the cause – but we could clearly see the effect – blood spoiled bandages and wounding it were. Not even the victims were uttering sounds of enlightenment. They had been hit with iron bars acquired, liberated in fact, from the tent store of the base Quarter Master. No near real-time intelligence was forthcoming.

I then deployed Chaplain Koos Rossouw and RSM M.C. Barnard to find out what the hell

was going on – but still nothing came forth. My sub-unit commanders were astounded. The strong informal internal intelligence system of 61 Mech was suddenly quiet; it yielded no valuable information. I promptly sat down with my command team and deeply assessed the troubling situation. I was fast running out of serviceable troops for Operation Protea; this was still being kept a big secret up to then, by the way. It was time to get to the bottom of things.

We realised that this had changed dramatically after Captain Payne and his merry men had arrived. So, I asked: Who is this Captain Payne? I want to see him in my white prefab not-often-used office at Omuthiya the next day at 10h30 – or words to that effect. I was at last going to meet this notorious man, apparently gifted with a ‘sixth sense’ and a commanding presence of note. I wanted to see him alone on orders without my adjutant or RSM being present - a serious one-on-one.

So, the next day in my office I met with Captain



61 Mech Command Gp Op Protea August 1981. Marche Mucho the commander of the Phantoms sits in front, on the right.

Payne and politely asked him to sit down on a camp chair facing me and started by inquiring why they called him Captain Payne. He coolly pulled down the shoulders of his dirty, sweaty,

odour-filled nutria overall. I could see the blue ink spots on his hands, indicating that he was a regular user of some devious and harmful substances. Tattooed on each shoulder were the three stars of a captain. I said: Thank you, Captain, now I understand.

The battle lines were now clearly drawn for our next bout of argument. So, I said again, clearly in control of the proceedings, why are you knocking the shit out of my troops, which he coolly answered with “Nobody respects us here. I know you are preparing to go to Angola. We want to go with. If you don’t take us with, I will destroy your base when you are gone.” This was one helluva powerful argument, and I thought deeply about his demand.

Ah, hell, I thought, in for a penny, in for a pound. This could become an interesting experiment and a morale booster to 61 Mech to boot. So, I made one of the more stupid decisions of my career and said, “OK, here are my conditions...” My conditions with Payne were that the tent of the Skurwe Hande would be pitched close to my

living quarters at Omuthiya – within spitting distance, to be more exact. When I did my daily inspections of the base, Payne would accompany me and my RSM. No more knocking the shit out of my troops. The Skurwe Hande would also be issued with brand-new R-4 Rifles – they were now armed to the teeth and dangerous.

In addition, they would come under command of Lieutenant Marche Mucho; be issued with a Buffel mine-protected vehicle; undergo strenuous combat training; protect the artillery battery of Captains Bernie Pols and Francois Van Eeden and be with the artillery as Ruth was with Naomi. Payne was not to tell any single soul that we were going into Angola. That revelation was my privilege to share with 61 Mech later. (Incidentally, the troops were only told the day before we crossed into Angola close to Ruacana and they responded with a spontaneous cheer.)

I thoroughly briefed Marche Mucho and insisted that no harm was to come to my special squad. Without any delay Marche had the tiffies of Sergeant Major Duppie du Plessis paint the words ‘Phantom’ diagonally across the side-plates of the Skurwe Hande’s mine protected Buffel. Marche Mucho was one of those exquisite national service junior leaders, tall, knowledgeable, charismatic and commanding. The



Cmdt Roland de Vries and Maj Epp van Lill

Skurwe Hande could not wish for better.

The Phantom Squad was now being made battle ready to protect Sierra Battery. Later, when I informed my RSM, he was not too happy with what I had arranged with Payne and what was to come – he thought that I was somewhat whacky, understandably so. Eventually the RSM quite comfortably succumbed to our Skurwe Hande ordeal. That a hair raising adventure was brewing for them, we did not realise at the time. My sub-unit commanders were slightly amused about the situation. The artillery was slightly perturbed by the excess baggage acquired. Padre Koos Rossouw, my Chaplain realized he had some extra work to do. I did not have any disciplinary problems any more with some of those few typical 61 Mech troops, who regularly caused the odd problem. Unofficially Captain Payne was now my partner in command. He would sort out the issues with my problem children at 61 Mech and they clearly knew it. Every day, I prayed a bit harder. Life returned to normal at 61 Mech, and it was business as usual at Omuthiya.

The next scene developed after Humbe was captured on D-Day. I ordered Combat Team Charlie under command of Major Joe Weyers to deploy rapidly towards the west. They were to establish a delaying position across the front of FAPLA's mobile reserve, which lay entrenched at Cahama. For this operation, a small mobile element of 44 Parachute Brigade, with renowned Colonel Jan Breytenbach in charge, was temporarily placed under operational command of 61 Mech.

I had requested him to accompany Combat Team Charlie for this operational sortie to the west with his potent little combat force of heavily armoured Sabre Land Rovers. The combat team of Johann Weyers duly deployed within 17 km striking distance from Cahama, facing FAPLA head on. The enemy was now well within the engagement range of the 140 mm guns of Captain Frans van Francois Van Eeden deployed to the rear of the fighting line. Night was approaching fast. The Phantom Squad

was there as well, closely protecting the artillery. Not too far away, slightly to the east at Mucope, I was leaguering for the night with the remainder of 61 Mech. We had an unproductive day searching for enemy remnants.

From our position at Mucope later that night, we would hear the crump of mortars and other more intensive fire coming from the west. Without any of us knowing it a large FAPLA column had escaped our attack on Xangongo. They were hiding somewhere in the dense bushes somewhere north of Xangongo and slightly west of Peu-Peu, undetected by our forces. They were waiting for darkness to exfiltrate unnoticed back to the safety of Cahama. The column consisted of an assortment of Russian armoured vehicles, military trucks and BM-21 multiple rocket launcher systems in tow. When night came the enemy column started moving stealthily back to the tarred road as silently as possible and then swung towards Cahama.

They travelled at low engine revolutions all neatly in a row with infrared lights applied; towards an unsuspecting Combat Team Charlie. In an amazing feat Jan Breytenbach and Combat Team Charlie of Joe Weyers destroyed the enemy column in detail on the road that night. The battle ensued halfway between the artillery and their forward positions. It required quickly deploying inwardly so as engage the enemy effectively. The enemy was stretched out along the perilous road in between the deployments of our force. It was a vicious fire fight and one that we could clearly hear from our position at Mucope. I was waiting anxiously for the outcome of the battle.

Miraculously, only three soldiers of 61 Mech were slightly wounded by incoming enemy mortar fire. When I debriefed Captain Payne and the Phantom Squad a few days later in the relative safety at our position at Xangongo they told me the following hair-raising story. Captain Payne had told his troops that they could relax for the evening, because they had worked hard through the day. They were lying together on the day's sun-warm road, some

of them naked. R-4 rifles were neatly stacked aside, barrels crossed. Ears were to the ground.

Payne suddenly heard the low drone of the enemy column approaching directly towards them on the road from the rear. He thought logically that it had to be the Sergeant Major approaching with replenishments. Then all hell broke loose. Tracer bullets were flying overhead, amplified by the crumps of thousands of explosive rounds. His troops lay scattered on both sides of the road. He told me that there was one thing uppermost in his mind centring on his promise to me made at Omuthiya: "Regroup, get my people safely back to the artillery and protect the guns" - which they subsequently did, miraculously without anybody being harmed in the fray. This was their story; whether everything was exactly true as they explained it, I do not know although I believed them and it matched the circumstantial evidence.

The incident had a tremendous effect on their self-esteem, about which I was extremely happy. They went back to Omuthiya later, I believed, as men, their lives changed forever.

They had an amazing experience to share with others. I sometimes wonder where they are today and what happened to them. For the Skurwe Hande, that eventful starlit night in Angola was there moment.

This was about ordinary people and ordinary lives and extraordinary outcomes - cometh the moment, cometh the men and Captain Payne.



61 Mech troops being briefed at Ruacana on 23 August 1981, forward assembly area, D minus 1.

The “Skurwe Hande” - An Insiders Account

***Pieter Schoeman, Skurwe Hande Platoon,
61 Mech Batallion HQ***

Skurwe Hande, a 61 Meg Experience

Like many others I was 17 when I attended national service at 4 SAI Bn in Middelburg in January 1981. With little life and people experience I had no idea of what was to follow. It soon became apparent that the army was not my favourite place and I eventually adopted a less ambitious approach. That was to let the 2 years pass as soon as possible without too much further physical torture as experienced in basic training at 4 SAI Bn and later Oudtshoorn. From Oudtshoorn I was sent to 1 SAI Bn in Bloemfontein and after a brief stint as a regiment police officer (RP) which ended when a new intake of apparent ex-policemen joined the regiment, I found myself in a strange new unit, a maintenance platoon, part of HQ Company which appeared to have been created for outcasts.

Perfect! They seem to have forgotten that my medical classification was G1K1 and we were not asked to do too much. I did a “sluiper-skurses” and would have failed had I not fallen asleep. Boredom set in and I risked AWOL for a weekend. On return my friend Ben and I were caught at the gate and were given the option, go to 61 Meg immediately or face trail and possible DB. Fantastic! Woke up in Pretoria, hiked to Bloemfontein and went to sleep in Nam, Angola border all in the same day!

Obviously 61 Mech looked more attractive and we were on board of a “flossy” the same afternoon landing at Grootfontein after a flight which seemed to end when the plane fell from the sky, but miraculously landing intact. It was now time to distribute live ammunition for the first time to about ten members of the notorious “maintenance platoon” as we were to be transported to Tsumeb and from there to Omuthiya,



Roland de Vries en Pieter Schoeman

61 Mech base camp.

The maintenance platoon soldiers were somewhat less trained, less knowledgeable, less interested, more reckless (to the point of stupidity) and downright more dangerous (not to the enemy, but to each other) than regular soldiers. Everyone was sitting on the back of the truck eyeing the bush with over alert suspicion expecting a contact with the enemy at any moment (and this was outside Grootfontein still miles from the border). I did not eye the bush that much; I was too busy ensuring no one's guns were accidentally pointing in my direction. At the back someone shouted, “Has anyone confiscated Visser's bullets?” Visser, it was generally considered, would be the first to accidentally

shoot someone else. In fact, I think he did end up in 1 Mil hospital later having shot himself in the foot. It was reassuring to know someone else other than me feared us instead of the enemy.

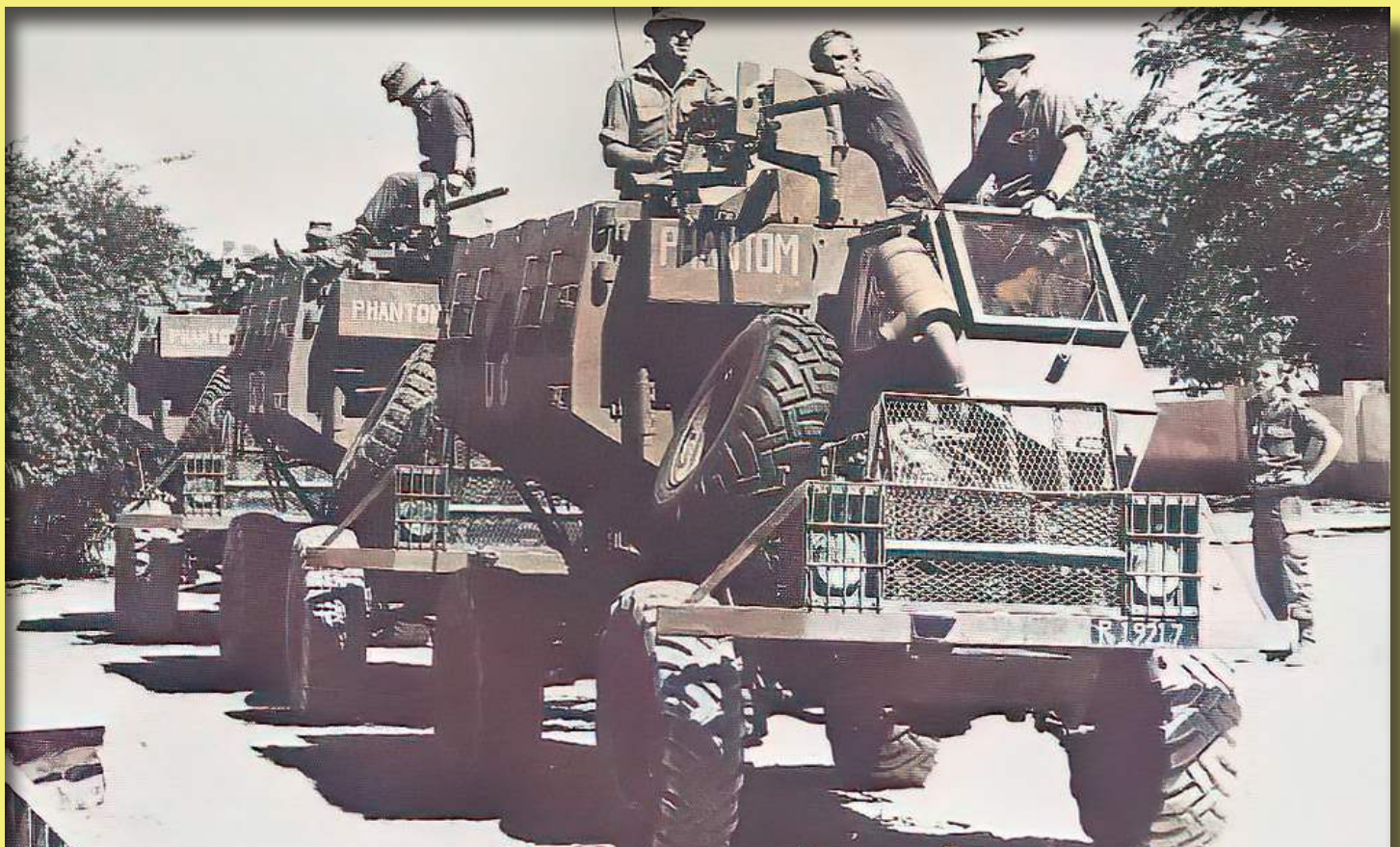
On arrival at 61 Mech we were ordered to report to a certain Captain Payne. If you watched the documentary “Grensoorlog” you will however know who Captain Payne was, as graciously described by our respected commander, Roeland De Vries. Captain Payne was in charge of the Skurwe Hande and their tents were situated somewhat outside of the perimeter of the camp. Somewhat far outside I noticed as we walked way out of the boundaries and the sentry outposts. It looked like apartheid between whites, and I was later to learn our function was to empty the dustbins, keep the boreholes running and general maintenance around the camp.

Captain Payne was not a captain or an officer at all but a private without rank but who had tattooed three stars on each shoulder, together with numerous other tattoos. He was shorter than average, built very masculine, appeared, and later displayed extreme agility and spoke with a distinct Cape Flats accent (“Hey

djy whitey”). He had the ability to jump from a standing position onto a clothing cupboard, which is about the height of a desk and a little more. He had a certain quiet stare, and everyone averted their eyes from his when confronted by him. I remembered his reputation from my RP days; the resources of the entire regimental police unit were utilized when his arrest was made at some stage some time before these events.

He always had a knife with him, not a flick knife but a simple pocketknife with a lock blade which he opened with a snap of the wrist. This knife was held against many of our throats lots of times with us wondering if he was insane enough to slit and kill. I cannot conclude whether to describe him as intelligent or not but the term psychopathic comes to mind.

For entertainment Captain Payne caught two or three wild or stray dogs and threw them into the trench or “loopgraaf” next to his tent. I do not remember if he would use his knife or chaka-sticks on them when he jumped in and fought with them. I once witnessed an incident at the walk-in movie theatre when a number of guys approached Captain Payne to sort him out for



something, he did to one of their friends. Payne jumped onto a high bench pulling out his knife shouting “whose first!” They all backed off.

With captain Payne in his tent was Cornick, his buddy also from the Cape who was not the sharpest tool in the shed. Cornick’s greatest day was when Rocky I, II and III were screened on the same day at the walk-in movie theatre at the mess hall. With them were Struwig, a guy from Durban who was only interested in getting stoned and whose every second statement was “cool bru”. It appeared that some other members of the Skurwe Hande were either awaiting trial or had something to do with criminal charges.

I found out the hard way the next day how Payne commanded the unit when we were offloading sandbags from a truck and Payne jumped off the truck next to me on the ground, landing on one foot, tripping me with the other and the next moment I was on my back with a knife in my face. I was free to fight him, but it would have to be a fight to the death. A two-pip lieutenant standing next to us just looked, said nothing, and then simply walked away. I drew the conclusion that the officers might have feared Payne or just allowed him to run his unit his way.

Early mornings Payne woke us up practicing with his “chaka-sticks”. He was quite accurate in throwing them at a target on a tree some distance away. Sometimes he took a run alone into the bush, R4 rifle & no shirt, and returned with some animal he intended to skin and braai for dinner at the campfire that night. It was wild, uncertain and with no proper authority or organisation in untamed bush in an operational zone where an enemy worse than Captain Payne could attack. We hardly ate in the mess hall; it was either Captain Payne’s kill that was braai’d or bacon which was taken (stolen) from the kitchen. Have you ever braai’d bacon? It is different.

We had one Buffel assigned to us and Captain Payne was always the driver. One morning we jumped into it and heard a gunshot go off in the

driver’s cabin. Apparently, Payne had shoved his R4 rifle into the corner of his driver’s cabin and accidentally discharged a round. The funny thing was he did not really react to it! He simply shrugged, started the Buffel and drove away!

Trips to the garbage dump were really weird. It was quite far away, out of earshot from the main camp and somehow the Skurwe Hande had fire buckets full of live M26 high explosive hand grenades to accompany full magazines of R4 bullets. The dump became a firework display, usually about 6-8 trigger happy unsupervised, reckless, and untrained soldiers shooting at anything and everything with depraved abandon. Once we were ready to leave but Struwig was still having fun shooting and bowling live grenades. Captain Payne took a few shots, about three, in front of his feet within a metre from him, just to attract his attention to call him to go.

Struwig was a real “cool bru” He once accidentally spilled his marijuana in the sand. This did not faze him. He took a cardboard box lid and piled a heap of sand on it. For the next four weeks he sat on his bed with tweezers, sand this side, grass (boom) that side, meticulously separating drugs from the dust. Life had a new purpose for him.

Eventually Captain Payne, we suspect, burned down one of the tents accusing the occupants of leaving a cigarette burning. This resulted in some “Skurwe Hande” troops immigrating to the main camp which left Ben and me in the one tent next to the other tent occupied by Payne, Cornick and Struwig. I think there were two or three others in a remaining tent.

Then it got really weird. One night we had another bacon braai, and my friend Ben passed a comment to Captain Payne which he didn’t like. We were sitting on big logs around the fire that night and I remember Captain Payne smoking a joint, calmly looked at Ben for a while, did not comment or say anything. Then he got up and went to his tent. He returned

with his R4 rifle and a full magazine, cocked his rifle and put it on his shoulder, the barrel an inch from Ben's head. I noticed the safety setting was switched to Afrikaans, or automatic, which if I remember my training, meant four bullets would be in the barrel by the time the first exists. He had one finger on the trigger while smoking a joint with the other hand. I was sitting on the other side of Ben and nobody moved or said a word for about 5 minutes.

I lived with burned bacon in a bush of undisciplined potential macho death around any corner every second in an area where the real enemy and war- death might be imminent. Yet this never really bothered me because the danger in the supply and maintenance lines way out of the action was a good enough battle for me to survive.

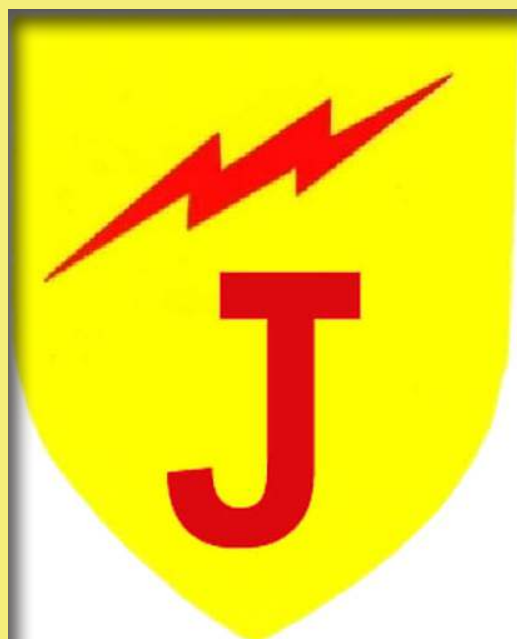
When we retired to our tents Ben would sometimes take his rifle to the entrance of the tent, shout "it's time to sleep, anyone who enters here gets it!" and cock his rifle. This was surviving a war of untrained aggressive mostly criminal individuals who did not care for consequences and regarded their weapons as toys or tools of intimidation to those who did respect it. My life was on a knife edge at all times, nervous, cautious, way unsettled and fearsome. This eventually went so far that I abandoned my "avoid

the real army approach" and reminded my officers that I had a G1K1 medical classification and asked for a transfer away from Captain Payne and into a fighting company. I would rather face the enemy's bullets than the insanity at the "Skurwe Hande".

My transfer was granted but before I had the opportunity to participate in any operation, I was granted special leave to attend my brother's wedding back in the states and with it the opportunity to "uitklaar" before the others. I handed in my rifle but was sent back to 61 Meg for the last few weeks and was advised that the enemy were seen close to the base, rifle to be carried with you at all times. Nice, mine was handed in!

When I finally "klaa-ed out" everyone in the Skurwe Hande and maintenance platoon, except me, had extra days to do for previous AWOL's.

They could not believe I was leaving already! I later heard rumours that Captain Payne was forcibly arrested after smoke grenades were thrown into his tent due to him threatening to shoot someone.



MEMBERSHIP OF THE 61 MECH VETERANS ASSOCIATION

You can join the 61 Mech Veterans Association as a 61 Mech Veteran (full membership) if you are a bona fide military veteran who served with Combat Group Juliet or 61 Mechanised Battalion Group or took part in operations or exercises with 61 Mech, regardless of gender, race or creed over the period 1978 to 31 December 2005. A full member has the right to vote for the election of office bearers at national and lower echelon levels. He/she has the right to attend all parades and functions of the association.

You can join the 61 Mech Veterans Association as a 61 Mech Supporter if you did not serve with Combat Group Juliet or 61 Mechanised Battalion Group, regardless of your state or country, as long as you subscribe to the aims and objectives of the association. This is also where friends, family and relatives of 61 Mech Supporters can join the association without having to be bona fide military veterans. Supporters of the association are entitled to attend all association parades, functions, and annual general meetings but do not have any rights to vote. They also get access to the 61 Mech member website to view the stories, photos and declassified military documents and may receive association correspondence.

If you want to join the 61 Mech Veterans Association for the first time click on this link, complete your details and make payment of your membership fees - <https://www.61mech.org.za/pages/subscribe>

Subscribe

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Subscription Fee (10 year membership)	R2,000.00	R2,000.00
	Subscribe	Subscribe